Caterer checklist

Questions to ask
Points to consider
Issues to discuss

Pick and choose the ones that apply to your caterer

- Can you see a range of sample menus and prices?
- Can you see some pictures of their work?
- What can they do for your budget?
- Can they cater for guests with special dietary requirements?
- Can you have a taste test of the food?
- Are there any extra costs e.g. glassware, linens, etc.?
- Is there a minimum charge?
- Do they require a deposit? What is the minimum deposit?
- What is their refund/cancellation policy?
- What happens to your deposit if they sell or close down their business? For example will your deposit be held in a trust account until your wedding?
- When do you need to pay the balance?
- When do you need to advise numbers?
- Do they have the necessary food preparation licences?
- Tell me about a wedding you did where something went wrong - how did you handle it?
- Do you specialise in certain cuisines or types of menu?
- Where is the food prepared? Do they bring it ready-cooked or do they need the kitchen?
- Do they take care of all the cleaning/washing up?
- When does the menu need to be finalised by?
- How is your wait staff dressed?
- For buffet meals, how often will the food be replenished? How long do you serve food for? Can guests help themselves for as long as they want?

- How many wait staff will we have? (Rule of thumb - 1 per 16 to 20 guests for a sit-down meal, 1 per 25 guests for buffet or cocktail receptions)
- How is the cost of beverages calculated?
- How is usage confirmed?
- What brands will be served? If they offer 'house' wine can you taste it?
- Can you bring your own beer, wine etc? If so, is there a corkage/serving charge?
- What alternatives to alcohol do they offer?
- If you've arranged a cash bar, what prices will be charged?
- Do they provide a bar person? When will they be staffing the bar?
- Are they familiar with the reception venue? If not will they confirm kitchen facilities, clean-up rules, etc.?
- Who will be responsible for any problems, breakages, etc.?
- If they are coming to your venue (home or hall) how will they transport and store the food?
- Is the price quoted guaranteed for your wedding day?
- Do they organise the cutting/serving of the wedding cake? Is there an extra charge for this?
- Can they provide boxed meals for you both to take away with you? (You might be so busy chatting with your guests or so nervous you miss the meal)
- Who will be there on the day making sure everything runs smoothly?
- Contract should include
    - menu
    - labour
    - beverages
    - rentals
    - any promises made by the caterer (e.g. "we're happy to include complimentary tea and coffee")
    - the name of the person you've been talking to.

Before you sign anything, read it carefully and ask for changes to anything you're not comfortable with.